12301.c.44
4

AN

ORATION,

DELIVERED AT THE NORTH CHURCH IN HARTFORD,
AT THE MEETING OF THE

CONNECTICUT SOCIETY

OF THE

CINCINNATI,

JULY 4th, 1787.

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE

INDEPENDENCE of the UNITED STATES.

BY JOEL BARLOW, ESQUIRE.

HARTFORD:
PRINTED BY HUDSON AND GOODWIN, NEAR THE BRIDGE.

At a meeting of Connecticut State Society of the Cincinnati, at Hartford, 4th July 1787.

VOTED, That Col. TRUMBULL and Col. HUMPHREYS be a Committee to wait on Mr. BARLOW, to return the thanks of this Society for his Oration delivered this day----And to desire a copy that it may be printed.

A true copy,

J. TRUMBULL, *Sec'ry.*

AN ORATION, &c.

MR. PRESIDENT,

Gentlemen of the Society,

And Fellow Citizens,

ON the Anniverſary of ſo great an event as the birth of the Empire in which we live, none will queſtion the propriety of paſſing a few moments in contemplating the various objects ſuggeſted to the mind by the important occaſion. But at the preſent period, while the bleſſings, claimed by the ſword of victory and promiſed in the voice of peace, remain to be confirmed by our future exertions—while the nouriſhment, the growth, and even the exiſtence of our empire depend upon the united efforts of an extenſive and divided people—the duties of this day aſcend from amuſement and congratulation to a ſerious patriotic employment.

WE are aſſembled, my friends, not to boaſt, but to realize—not to inflate our national vanity by a pompous relation of paſt atchievements in the council or in the field; but, from a modeſt

retroſpect

retroſpect of the truly dignified part already acted by our countrymen, from an accurate view of our preſent ſituation, and from an anticipation of the ſcenes that remain to be unfolded—to diſcern and familiarize the duties that ſtill await us, as citizens, as ſoldiers and as men.

Revolutions in other countries have been effected by accident. The faculties of human reaſon and the rights of human nature have been the ſport of chance and the prey of ambition. And when indignation has burſt the bands of ſlavery, to the deſtruction of one tyrant, it was only to impoſe the manacles of another. This aroſe from the imperfection of that early ſtage of ſociety, which neceſſarily occaſioned the foundation of empires on the eaſtern continent to be laid in ignorance, and which induced a total inability of foreſeeing the improvements of civilization, or of adapting the government to a ſtate of ſocial refinement.

I shall but repeat a common obſervation when I remark, that on the weſtern continent the ſcene was entirely different; and a new taſk, totally unknown to the legiſlators of other nations, was impoſed upon the fathers of the American Empire.

Here was a people thinly ſcattered over an extenſive territory, lords of the ſoil on which they trod, commanding a prodigious length of coaſt and an equal breadth of frontier—a people habituated to liberty, profeſſing a mild and benevolent religion

religion, and highly advanced in ſcience and civilization. To conduct ſuch a people in a revolution, the addreſs muſt be made to reaſon as well as to the paſſions. And to reaſon, to the clear underſtanding of theſe variouſly affected colonies the ſolemn addreſs was made.

A PEOPLE thus enlightened, and capable of diſcerning the connection of cauſes with their remoteſt effects, waited not the experience of oppreſſion in their own perſons; which they well knew would render them leſs able to conduct a regular oppoſition. But in the moment of their greateſt proſperity, when every heart expanded with the increaſing opulence of the Britiſh-American dominions, and every tongue united in the praiſes of the parent State and her patriot king, when many circumſtances concurred which would have rendered an ignorant people ſecure and inattentive to their future intereſts—at this moment the eyes of the American Argus were opened to the firſt and moſt plauſible invaſion of the colonial rights.

IN vain were we told, and perhaps with the greateſt truth and ſincerity, that the monies levied in America were all to be expended within the country, and for our benefit: Equally idle was the policy of Great-Britain in commencing their new ſyſtem by a ſmall and almoſt imperceptible duty, and that upon very few articles. It was not the quantity of the tax, it was not the mode of appropriation, but it was the *right of the de-*

mand,

mand, which was called in queſtion. Upon this the people deliberated, this they diſcuſſed in a cool and diſpaſſionate manner, and this they oppoſed, in every ſhape that an artful and ſyſtematic miniſtry could deviſe, for more than ten years, before they aſſumed the ſword.

THIS ſingle circumſtance, aſide from the magnitude of the object or the event of the conteſt, will ſtamp a peculiar glory on the American revolution, and mark it as a diſtinguiſhed æra in the hiſtory of mankind; that ſober reaſon and reflection have done the work of enthuſiaſm and performed the miracles of gods. In what other age or nation has a laborious agricultural people, at eaſe upon their own farms, ſecure and diſtant from the approach of fleets and armies, tide-waiters and ſtamp-maſters, *reaſoned* before they have *felt*, and from the dictates of duty and conſcience, encountered dangers, diſtreſs and poverty, for the ſake of ſecuring to poſterity a government of independence and peace? The toils of ages and the fate of millions were to be ſuſtained by a few hands. The voice of unborn nations called upon them for ſafety; but it was a *ſtill ſmall voice*, the voice of rational reflection. Here was no Cromwell to inflame the people with bigotry and zeal, no Cæſar to reward his followers with the ſpoils of vanquiſhed foes, and no territory to acquire by conqueſt. Ambition, Superſtition and Avarice, thoſe univerſal torches of war, never illumined an American

field

field of battle. But the permanent principles of ſober policy ſpread through the colonies, rouſed the people to aſſert their rights, and conducted the revolution.

It would be wandering from the objects which ought to occupy our preſent attention, * again to recount the numerous acts of the Britiſh Parliament which compoſe that ſyſtem of tyranny deſigned for the ſubjugation of America: Neither can we indulge in the detail of thoſe memorable events which marked our various ſtages of reſiſtance, from the glooms of unſucceſsful ſupplication, to the ſplendor of victory and acknowledged ſovereignty. The former were the theme of ſenatorial eloquence, producing miracles of union and exertion in every part of the continent, till we find them preſerved for everlaſting remembrance in that declaratory Act of Independence, which gave being to an empire and dignified the day we now commemorate; the latter are freſh in the memory of every perſon of the leaſt information. It would be impertinence, if not a breach of delicacy, to attempt a recital of thoſe glorious achievements, eſpecially before an audience, part of whom have been diſtinguiſhed actors in the ſcene, others the anxious and applauding ſpectators. To the faithful hiſtorian we reſign the taſk; the hiſtorian, whom it is hoped the preſent age will deem

it

* This Oration was preceded by the lecture of the Act of Independence; which, by an order of this State Society, is in future to make part of their public exerciſes at every annual meeting.

it their duty as well as their intereſt, to furniſh, encourage and ſupport.

WHATEVER praiſe is due for the taſk already performed, it is certain that much remains to be done. The revolution is but half completed. *Independence* and *Government* were the two objects contended for, and but one is yet obtained. To the glory of the preſent age and the admiration of the future, our ſeverance from the Britiſh empire was conducted upon principles as noble as they were new, and unprecedented in the hiſtory of human actions. Could the ſame generous principles, the ſame wiſdom and unanimity be exerted in effecting the eſtabliſhment of a permanent fœderal ſyſtem, what an additional luſtre would it pour upon the preſent age! a luſtre hitherto unequalled; a diſplay of magnanimity, for which mankind may never behold another opportunity.

WITHOUT an efficient government our Independence will ceaſe to be a bleſſing. Shall that glow of patriotiſm and unſhaken perſeverance, which have been ſo long conſpicuous in the American character, deſert us at our utmoſt need? Shall we loſe ſight of our own happineſs, becauſe it has grown familiar by a near approach? Shall thy labours, O Waſhington, be beſtowed in vain? Haſt thou conducted us to independence and peace, and ſhall we not receive the bleſſings at thy hands? Where are the ſhades of our fallen friends? and what is their

language

language on this occaſion? *Warren*, *Montgomery*, *Mercer*, *Wooſter*, *Scammel* and *Laurens*, all ye hoſts of departed heroes! rich is the treaſure you have laviſhed in the cauſe, and prevalent the price you have paid for our freedom. Shall the purchaſe be neglected? the fair inheritance lie without improvement, expoſed to every daring invader? Forbid it, honour, forbid it, gratitude; and oh, may Heaven avert the impending evil.

In contemplating the price of our Independence, it will never be forgotten that it was not entirely the work of our own hands; nor could it probably have been eſtabliſhed, in the ſame term of time, by all the blood and treaſure, that America unaſſiſted was able to furniſh for the conteſt. Much of the merit is due, and our warmeſt acknowledgments will ever flow to that illuſtrious Monarch, the father of nations and friend of the diſtreſt; that Monarch, who by his early aſſiſtance taught us not to diſpair, and, when we had given a ſufficient proof of our military virtue and perſeverance, who joined us in alliance upon terms of equality, gave us a rank and credit among the maritime nations of Europe, and furniſhed fleets and armies, money and military ſtores, to put a ſplendid period to the important conflict.

Where ſhall we find language to expreſs a nation's gratitude for ſuch unexampled goodneſs and magnanimity? my friends, it is not to be done with language. Our ſenſe of obligation

for favours received from Heaven is beſt expreſſed by a wiſe improvement. Does Louis aſk for more? and can duty be ſatisfied with leſs? Unite in a permanent fœderal government, put your commerce upon a reſpectable footing; your arts and manufactures, your population, your wealth and glory will increaſe: and when an hundred millions of people are compriſed within your territory and made happy by your ſway, then ſhall it be known that the hand of that monarch aſſiſted in planting the vine from which ſo great a harveſt is produced. His generous heart ſhall exult in the proſpect, his royal deſcendants, fired by the great example, ſhall imitate his virtues, and the world ſhall unite in his praiſe.

Here ſhall that pride of the military character, the gallant Fayette, find his compenſation for a life of diſintereſted ſervice; whoſe toils have not ceaſed with the termination of the war, and whoſe ſucceſsful endeavours to promote our intereſt, in commercial and political arrangements, can only be equalled by his achievements in the field. How will the poſterity of that nobleman, and that of the other brave officers of his nation who have fought by your ſides, on reviewing the American hiſtory, rejoice in the fame of their fathers; nor even regret the fate of thoſe who bled in ſo glorious a field!

An acknowledgement of the merits of Rochambeau and Chaſtellux, D'Eſtaing, De Graſſe and De Barras, and the other heroes of the French army and navy—affection to the memory

of

of our brethren and companions who have bled in our battles—reverence to the advice of our illuſtrious Commander in Chief, and of all thoſe ſages and patriots who have compoſed our councils, from the time of the firſt Congreſs to the preſent moment—honour to our worthy creditors in Europe—a regard to the conduct of the Imperial Sovereigns of Ruſſia and Germany, who evince to the world that they revere the cauſe of liberality and human happineſs in which we drew the ſword—a reſpect to the memory of the venerable Frederick of Pruſſia, whoſe dying hand put the ſignature to a treaty of commerce with the United States upon the moſt liberal principles that ever originated in a diplomatic council—a ſacred regard to ourſelves and to all poſterity—and, above all, a religious gratitude to our heavenly Benefactor, who hath hitherto ſmiled upon our endeavours—call upon us, in the language of a thouſand tongues, for firmneſs, unanimity and perſeverence, in completing the revolution and eſtabliſhing the empire.

THE preſent is juſtly conſidered an alarming criſis; perhaps the moſt alarming that America ever ſaw. We have contended with the moſt powerful nation and ſubdued the braveſt and beſt appointed armies; but now we have to contend with *ourſelves*, and encounter paſſions and prejudices more powerful than armies and more dangerous to our peace. It is not for glory, it is for exiſtence that we contend.

MUCH is expected from the Fœderal Convention now ſitting

at

at Philadelphia; and it is a happy circumſtance that ſo general a confidence from all parts of the country is centred in that reſpectable Body. Their former ſervices as individuals command it, and our ſituation requires it. But although much is expected from them, yet more is demanded from ourſelves.

The firſt great object is to convince the people of the importance of their preſent ſituation; for the majority of a great people, on a ſubject which they underſtand, will never act wrong. If ever there was a time, in any age or nation, when the fate of millions depended on the voice of one, it is the preſent period in theſe ſtates. Every free citizen of the American Empire ought now to conſider himſelf as the legiſlator of half mankind. When he views the amazing extent of territory, ſettled and to be ſettled under the operation of his laws —when, like a wiſe politician, he contemplates the population of future ages; the changes to be wrought by the poſſible progreſs of arts, in agriculture, commerce and manufactures; the increaſing connection and intercourſe of nations, and the effect of one rational political ſyſtem upon the general happineſs of mankind—his mind, dilated with the great idea, will realize a liberality of feeling which leads to a rectitude of conduct. He will ſee that the ſyſtem to be eſtabliſhed by his ſuffrage is calculated for the great benevolent purpoſes of extending peace, happineſs and propreſſive improvement to a large proportion of his fellow creatures. As there is a probability that the ſyſtem to be propoſed by the Convention may anſwer this deſcrip-

tion

tion, there is ſome reaſon to hope it will be viewed by the people with that candour and diſpaſſionate reſpect which is due to the importance of the ſubject.

While the anxiety of the feeling heart is breathing the perpetual ſigh for the attainment of ſo great an object, it becomes the ſtrongeſt duty of the ſocial connexion, to enlighten and harmonize the minds of our fellow citizens, and point them to a knowledge of their intereſts, as an extenſive fœderal people and fathers of increaſing nations. The price put into their hands is great, beyond all compariſon; and, as they improve it, they will entail happineſs or miſery upon a larger proportion of human beings, than could be affected by the conduct of all the nations of Europe united.

Those who are poſſeſſed of abilities or information in any degree above the common rank of their fellow citizens are called upon by every principle of humanity, to diffuſe a ſpirit of candour and rational enquiry upon theſe important ſubjects.

Adams, to his immortal honour and the timely aſſiſtance of his country, has ſet the great example. His treatiſe in defence of the conſtitutions, though confined to the State Republics, is calculated to do infinite ſervice, by correcting thouſands of erroneous ſentiments ariſing from our inexperience; ſentiments, which if uncorrected in this early ſtage of our political exiſtence, will be the ſource of calamities without meaſure and without end. Should that venerable philoſopher and ſtateſman be

induced to continue his enquiries, by tracing the history of Confederacies, and, with his usual energy and perspicuity, delineate and defend a system adapted to the circumstances of the United States—I will not say he could deserve more from his distrest country, but he would crown a life of patriotic labours and render an essential additional service to the world.

While America enjoys the peculiar felicity of seeing those who have conducted her councils and her battles retire like Cincinnatus to the humble labours of the plough, it must be remembered, that she there expects a continuance of their patriotic exertions. The Society of the Cincinnati, established upon the most benevolent principles, will never lose sight of their duty, in rendering every possible aid, as citizens, to that community which they have defended as soldiers. They will rejoice, that, although Independence was the result of force, yet Government is the child of reason. As they are themselves an example of the noblest effort of human nature, *the conquest of self*, in obeying the voice of their country and exchanging the habits, the splendor and importance of military life, for domestic labour and poverty; they will readily inculcate on others the propriety of sacrificing private and territorial advantages to the good of the great majority, the salvation of the United States.

Slaves to no party, but servants of the whole, they have wielded the sword of every State in the Union and bled by the side

of

of her ſons. Their attachments are as extenſive as their labours. FRIENDSHIP and CHARITY the great pillars of their Inſtitution will find their proper objects through the extended territory, and ſeek the happineſs of all.

WHILE we contemplate the endearing objects of our aſſociation, and indulge in the gloomy pleaſure of recollecting that variety of ſuffering which prompted the ſympathetic ſoldier to inſtitute this memorial of his friendſhip, fraternal affection recalls the ſcene of parting, and enquires with ſolicitude the fate of our beloved companions.

SINCE the laſt anniverſary, the death of General Howe has diminiſhed the number of our brethren and called for the tribute of a tear. With ſome of the foibles incident to human nature, he poſſeſſed many valuable accompliſhments. His natural good underſtanding he had imbelliſhed with conſiderable attention to polite literature. As a ſoldier, he was brave; as an officer, attentive to diſcipline; he commanded with dignity and obeyed with alacrity, and whatever talents he poſſeſſed were uniformly and cheerfully devoted to the ſervice of his country.

BUT a few weeks previous to that period, the much lamented deaths of Tilghman and M'Dougall were ſucceſſively announced, and the tidings received with a peculiar poignancy of grief. What citizen of the American empire does not join the general voice of gratitude, when contemplating the merits

of

of thoſe diſtinguiſhed officers; and ſwell the tide of ſympathy with his bereaved country, when deprived of their future aſſiſtance? They were ornaments to the States in which they lived, as well as to the profeſſion in which they acquired their glory.

AMIABLE and heroic Tilghman! ſhort was the career of thy fame, but much haſt thou performed for thy country. Of thee ſhall it ever be remembered, that no ſocial virtue was a ſtranger to thy breaſt, and no military achievement too daring for thy ſword. While we condole with thy afflicted father for the loſs of ſo dear a ſon, permit the tear of friendſhip to flow for its own bereavement. And as oft as the anniverſary of this day ſhall aſſemble the companions of thy life to rejoice in the freedom of their country, they ſhall mingle a ſigh to thy laſting memory and bewail thy untimely fate.

UNTIMELY alſo was the death of the brave and the patriotic M'Dougall. Though many years were worn away in his unremitted labours for the public ſafety—though his early and decided exertions againſt the claims of Great-Britain had an eſſential influence in determining the conduct of the Province in which he reſided—though he was the nerve of war, the wiſdom of council and one of our prineipal ſupporters in the acqueſt of Independence—yet theſe but ſhow us the neceſſity of ſuch characters in eſtabliſhing the bleſſings of the acquiſition. While it ſhall require the ſame wiſdom and unſhaken fortitude, the ſame patience and perſeverence to rear the fabric of our empire,

pire, as it did to lay the foundation, Patriotism and Valour in ſympathetic affection will bemoan the loſs of M'Dougall.

Happy would it be for America, thrice happy for the feelings of ſorrowing friendſhip, could the liſt of our deceaſed companions be cloſed even with the names of thoſe worthy heroes. But Heaven had beſtowed too much glory upon the life of the favourite Greene, to allow it a long duration.

My affectionate Auditory will anticipate more than can be uttered, in the melancholy duty of contemplating his diſtinguiſhed excellence. To any Aſſembly that could be collected in America, vain would be the attempt, to illuſtrate his character or embelliſh the ſcene of his exploits. It is a ſubject to be felt, but not to be deſcribed. To poſterity indeed it may be told, as an incentive to the moſt exalted virtue and aſtoniſhing enterprize, that the man, who carried in his native genius all the reſources of war, and the balance of every extreme of fortune—who knew the advantages to be derived from defeat, the vigilance of military arrangement, the rapidity and happy moment of aſſault, the deliberate activity of battle, and the various important uſes of victory—that the man who poſſeſſed every conceivable quality of a warrior, was, in his public and private character, without a foible or a fault: That all the amiable as well as heroic virtues were aſſembled in his ſoul, and that it was the love of a rational and enlightened age, and not the ſtupid ſtare of barbarity, that expreſſed his praiſe.

The map of America may deſignate the vaſt extent of con-

 quered

quered country recovered by his ſword: The future traveller in the Southern States may be pointed by the peaſant to the various regions containing monuments of his valour and his ſkill; where, amid his marches and countermarches, his ſtudied retreats and his rapid approaches, every advantage given to the enemy was reſumed with tenfold utility and certain conqueſt: The hiſtoric Muſe, as a legacy to future ages, may tranſmit with heroic dignity the feats of her favourite Chief: But who ſhall tranſmit the feelings of the heart, or give the more intereſting repreſentation of his worth? The *hero* will remain, but the *man* muſt be loſt.

The grief of his bereaved conſort, aggravated by the univerſal teſtimony of his merit, we hope will receive ſome alleviation from the ardent ſympathy of thouſands, whoſe hearts were penetrated with his virtues, and whoſe tears would have flowed upon his hearſe.

But we will not open afreſh the wounds, which we cannot cloſe. The beſt eulogium of the good and great is expreſſed by an emulation of their virtues. As thoſe of the illuſtrious Greene were equally uſeful in every department in which human ſociety can call a man to act, every friend to America muſt feel the want of his aſſiſtance in the duties that remain to be performed. Yet, as theſe duties are of the rational and pacific kind, the performance is more attainable and emulation the better encouraged. In military operations, none but the ſoldier can be diſtinguiſhed, nor any but the fortunate are ſure of rendering ſervice: but here is a theatre

of

of action for every citizen of a great country; in which the ſmalleſt circumſtance will have its weight, and on which infinite conſequences will depend.

The preſent is an age of philoſophy; and America, the empire of reaſon. Here, neither the pageantry of courts nor the glooms of ſuperſtition have dazzled or beclouded the mind. Our duty calls us to act worthy of the age and the country which gave us birth. Though inexperience may have betrayed us into errors; yet theſe have not been fatal; and our own diſcernment will point us to their proper remedy.

However defective the preſent confederated ſyſtem may appear; yet a due conſideration of the circumſtances under which it was framed, will teach us rather to admire its wiſdom than to murmur at its faults. The ſame political abilities which were diſplayed in that inſtitution, united with the experience we have had of its opperation, will doubtleſs produce a ſyſtem, which will ſtand the teſt of ages, in forming a powerful and happy people.

Elevated with this extenſive proſpect, we may conſider preſent inconveniences as unworthy of regret. At the cloſe of the war, an uncommon plenty of circulating ſpecie and a univerſal paſſion for trade tempted many individuals to involve themſelves in ruin and injure the credit of their country. But theſe are evils which work their own remedy. The paroxiſm is already over; induſtry is increaſing faſter than ever it declined; and, with ſome exceptions where legiſlative authority has

has ſanctified fraud, the people are honeſtly diſcharging their private debts and encreaſing the reſources of their wealth.

Every poſſible encouragement for great and generous exertions, is now preſented before us. Under the idea of a permanent and happy government, every point of view, in which the future ſituation of America can be placed, fills the mind with a peculiar dignity, and opens an unbounded field of thought. The natural reſources of the country are inconceivably various and great; the enterpriſing genius of the people promiſes a moſt rapid improvement in all the arts that embelliſh human nature; the bleſſings of a rational government will invite emigrations from the reſt of the world, and fill the empire with the worthieſt and happieſt of mankind; while the example of political wiſdom and felicity here to be diſplayed will excite emulation through the kingdoms of the earth, and meliorate the condition of the human race.

In the pleaſing contemplation of ſuch glorious events, and comparing the ſcenes of action that adorn the weſtern hemiſphere, with what has taken place in the eaſt, may we not apply to our country the language of the prophet of Iſrael, though ſpoken on a different occaſion "The glory of this latter houſe "ſhall be greater than of the former, ſaith the Lord of hoſts; "and in this place will I give peace, ſaith the Lord of hoſts:" peace to any diſorders that may at preſent ſubſiſt among us, peace to the contending paſſions of nations, peace to this empire, to future ages, and through the extended world.

BRITISH 29 JY 75 MUSEUM